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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ACCRA 001041

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SUBJECT: GHANA'S RULING NPP PREPARES FOR ELECTION 2008

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Classified By: PolChief Scott B. Ticknor for reasons 1.4 (d) and (e).

11. (C) Summary: In December, 2007, the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) will hold its national convention to select its candidate for the 2008 presidential election. There are currently 19 NPP aspirants (although none of them have formally registered with the party as a candidate), including the Vice President and nine Cabinet ministers. Others may come forward in the coming months but many are likely to drop out in the run up to the convention. Factors influencing the party's choice will be ethnic considerations, party loyalty, personality, and money. At this point the most viable candidates seem to be Vice President Mahama, Foreign Minister Akufo-Addo, Trade Minister Kyerematen, former Finance Minister Yaw Osafo Maafo, and Water Resources and Housing Minister Owusu-Agyeman. End summary.

Ministerial Aspirants Will Resign  
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12. (C) An NPP advisory committee has recommended December 15, 2007 as the date for the next party convention, but this needs to be ratified in an expected party leadership meeting in June. According to NPP National Organizer Lord Commey, if the party convention is in December, aspirants will need to register as candidates between September and November. According to the party's constitution, sitting ministers who register as candidates must at that point resign from their government positions to avoid possible conflicts of interest. As a result, the GOG is expected to lose up to eight of its most prominent ministers by the end of November, 2007, including its Foreign, Defense and Trade Ministers (this rule does not apply to the Vice President). The President has the prerogative to replace these ministers. Commey told PolChief that the President is likely to ask other ministers to cover some of these portfolios temporarily, with the expectation that he may give some of these ministers their jobs back if they are not selected as the NPP's presidential candidate (Commey also said the President may shuffle his Cabinet in the next few months, which could impact some of the presidential hopefuls.).

The Challenges  
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13. (C) Despite President Kufuor's pleas that candidates not campaign this far in advance, all the aspirants have been in campaign mode for months. According to Lord Commey and NPP General Secretary Nana Ohene Ntow, the large number of

aspirants and the early campaigning have generated an unprecedented level of friction, which the party is having difficulty managing.

14. (C) To win, the NPP will need to find support beyond its traditional Ashanti ethnic base. It can count on core support in the large Ashanti region and will seek to improve on its poor 2004 results in Northern and Volta Regions. However, Eastern, Central, Western and Greater Accra regions had sizable numbers of floating voters in past elections and will be the key battlegrounds in 2008. The 2,300 delegates at the December 2007 convention (10 from each of Ghana's 230 parliamentary constituencies) will evaluate aspirants with these ethnic and regional calculations in mind, in addition to considering personal traits and party loyalties in assessing who they think can beat the NDC presidential candidate, former Vice President John Evans Atta Mills.

The Top of the Pack  
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15. (C) The following information updates reftel assessment of the most promising NPP aspirants:

Alan Kyerematen: Trade and Industry Minister Alan Kyerematen, 51, is widely viewed by the pro-government media as the 2008 NPP presidential front-runner. A former Ambassador to the United States, and founding member and Chairman of the Young Executive Forum (an NPP fund raising group) he is moderate, amiable, media savvy, and apparently well resourced. However, he is not widely known outside the party. He is not a natural campaigner, especially when compared to other Cabinet colleagues. For some, he is tainted by being too close to President Kufuor and his Chief of Staff, Kwadwo Mpiani. Kyerematen is relatively young and therefore subject to criticism that he lacks sufficient

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experience. Kyerematen is playing up his ethnic Fanti ties (his father was Fanti) but he is perceived as more Ashanti (his mother's side), which may also prove to be a liability.

Nana Akufo-Addo: Foreign Minister Nana Akufo-Addo, 63, should be a strong contender for the presidential nomination. He has impeccable credentials as a Founding Member of the NPP, three-term Member of Parliament, Chairman of the Party's Legal committee, Ranking Member for Justice and former Attorney General. He is smart, articulate, and a skillful politician and was the second place finisher in the last contested NPP primary. He is believed to have a following that goes well beyond his traditional base in the Eastern Region. His main liabilities are his Akyem royal lineage (which may hurt him in the Ashanti-Akyem rivalry) and his perceived arrogance.

Owusu-Agyeman: Hackman Owusu-Agyeman, 65, Water Resources, Works and Housing Minister has solid credentials within the ruling party and extensive government experience. He is a tough, well-resourced player with a power base in the Eastern Region. He operates cautiously and has so far kept himself busy in seven regions (Eastern, Central, Ashanti, Western, Greater Accra, Northern and Upper East) safely away from the media glare, although that is getting difficult to maintain now. He represents the conservative strand in the party and is likely to earn the support of the old guard. Other contenders increasingly treat him as a strong challenger.

Osafo-Mafo: Yaw Osafo-Mafo, 64, has long been a leading member of President Kufuor's government, first as Finance Minister and later as Education and Sports Minister. Osafo Mafo's wit, stature in the ruling party, grip on the economy and knowledge about government economic policies make him a formidable candidate. He is popular in parliament and his campaign activists claim party supporters greeted him ecstatically when he visited Ashanti, Northern, Western and Central regions. However, President Kufuor dropped him in a

2006 Cabinet reshuffle and is reportedly openly campaigning against him as a presidential candidate. He attacked Alan Kyerematen early in the campaign, sowing bitterness in some parts of the party. Allegations of corruption and abuse of the procurement process cloud his prospects.

Aliu Mahama: At this point, Vice President Alhaji Aliu Mahama appears the least likely of this top group to win the nomination. He does not talk openly about his presidential bid but has continued canvassing for votes among potential party delegates. His strategy has been to support the president's program and use every opportunity on official tours to project himself. He may do well among Ashantis who recognize the anti-Ashanti sentiment in the country but want a non-Akyem candidate (his campaign coordinator in Ashanti claims Aliu controls about 25% of delegates in the region). While he has name recognition, Aliu is not widely viewed as charismatic or politically savvy. Although he is the only Northerner and Muslim in the race, he cannot shepherd the northern/Muslim bloc vote to his advantage. Even in his own constituency, the NPP is deeply divided. Aliu is unpopular within a part of the Muslim community and his ability to appeal to the 69% Christian population is questionable.

#### Two Wild Cards

¶6. (C) Dan Botwe and Papa Owusu-Ankomah are unlikely to win the ticket but are wild cards that bear watching. Botwe, former General Secretary for two terms and until last year Minister for Information, has spent months wooing party youths and potential delegates in Eastern, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Upper East and Upper West regions. He is an attractive candidate with strong support within the party leadership but his youth (49 years old) and lack of funds are serious handicaps. Papa Owusu-Ankomah, former Majority Leader of Parliament, Attorney General, and Minister of Interior, and currently Minister of Education, Science and Sports, reportedly enjoys excellent relations with the President. He has roots in the Western, Eastern Region and Central Regions, which should benefit him as a candidate. Nonetheless, his late start and lack of charisma make him a dark horse.

#### The Second String

¶7. (C) The remaining aspirants are unlikely to make much impact. These include: Addo Kufuor (Minister of Defense and the President's brother), Kofi Konadu Apraku (former Regional

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Integration Minister), Jake Obetsebi-Lampitey (Minister of Tourism and Diasporan Relations), Kwabena Agyepong (former Presidential Press Secretary), Professor Kwabena Frimpong Boateng (a heart surgeon), Mike Oquaye (Communications Minister and professor of political science), Felix Owusu Adjapong (Minister of Parliamentary Affairs), and Arthur Kennedy (a U.S. based doctor).

#### Comment

¶8. (C) NPP sources expect no more than ten aspirants will formally register, while many who are in the race for publicity or to position themselves for future leadership positions will drop out over the next few months. It is still early in the game and many things could influence the race. In the past few weeks, for example, Alan Kyerematen has been battling allegations of impropriety and conflict of interest in a loan he approved to a parastatal, which could seriously hurt his presidential bid. We expect plenty of horse-trading in the coming months as intra-party friction intensifies.  
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